

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
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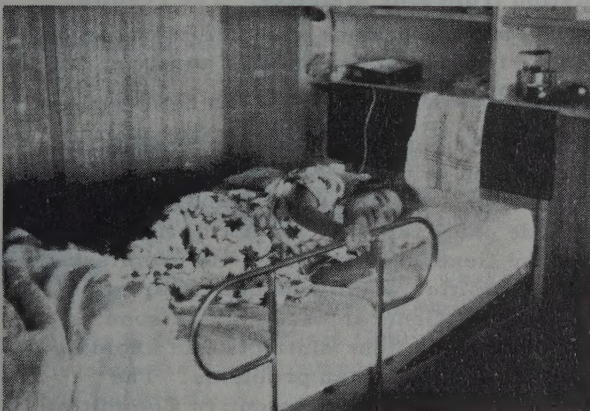
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SEIREIEN OPENS ITS DOORS

On October 4, the first residents were moved into Hiroshima Seireien, the nursing home built to perform the practical ministry of housing and caring for aged persons, including A-bomb victims and, at the same time, give symbolic expression by Japanese and overseas Christians to their recognition of joint involvement in the evil of World War II.

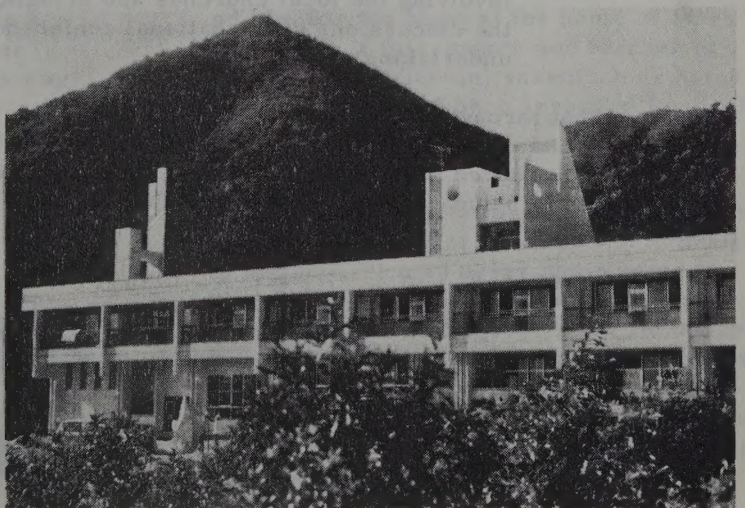


The two-story, ferro-concrete building of 50 beds is the first unit in a plan that envisages eventual expansion into a 150-bed hospital. The immediate next step is construction of a dormitory to house staff.

A staff of 22 persons has been recruited, many of them coming from distant cities in Japan--an indication of the extent to which interest in Seireien has spread throughout the churches.

The budget for land purchase and building construction for the unit just completed was set at ¥145 million (\$440,000); the major portion of this has been subscribed in Japan, in the following proportions: ¥57,000,000, domestic church gifts; ¥34,000,000, national and prefectural subsidies; ¥17,000,000, local and general gifts. Christians overseas have also responded generously to the appeal for help for the Seireien Home.

On Sunday morning, September 26, 600 persons attended a union service of thanksgiving and dedication held at Hiroshima Jo Gakuin. In the afternoon another ceremony was held at Seireien, attended by many local dignitaries and presided over by Kyodan Moderator Mitsuho Yoshida.



KYODAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY-----NOT YET

The Standing Committee of the Kyodan in its meeting held at the Japan Christian Center in Tokyo on Oct. 4-5 voted to postpone the convening of the 17th General Assembly. The convening of the General Assembly before the end of October 1971 had been a provision of the D-Plan adopted by the Committee in its February 1971 meeting, when Moderator Mitsuho Yoshida was handed the gavel by past Moderator Kiyoshi Ii, who resigned at that time.

The inability of four of the larger districts (Tokyo, Osaka, Hyogo and Kyoto) to convene their assemblies to elect delegates to the General Assembly was the deciding factor leading to the vote on postponement. The Standing Committee, prior to the Oct. 4-5 session, had made serious efforts through questionnaires and direct negotiations to ascertain the thinking and obtain the advice of the district executive committees and the newly elected delegates to the General Assembly (220 from 12 districts) with regard to the calling of the 17th General Assembly without representation from four districts. The results of the questionnaires, bolstered by the opinions of the district moderators who had been invited to participate in the October meeting, led the committee to decide on postponement.

The present Standing Committee members will continue in office until their successors can be elected by a General Assembly. Writing in the church's weekly on Oct. 16 (Kyodan Shimpō, p. 1, #3674), Moderator Yoshida made public apology for not being able to lead the Kyodan to convene the General Assembly. He promised that the officers and Standing Committee would redouble their efforts to make possible the convening of the General Assembly as soon as possible. The problems that prevent the four districts from holding their assemblies will be taken up as all-Kyodan problems. The Standing Committee has instructed the Standing Executive Committee to implement plans for consultations on the local, sub-district, district and regional levels leading to a national conference to be held in March 1972 to discuss the problems of the Kyodan and seek a solution. The basis of the discussions will be the moderator's sokatsu to be prepared and sent to all the districts and churches. Involving the local churches and bringing their opinions to bear on the discussions at the national conference are the goals of this undertaking.

It is hoped that through this process, dialogue will renew mutual trust and result in a right understanding of God's leading for His church at this time. It is for this outcome that Moderator Yoshida has appealed to members of the Kyodan to pray.

HIROSHIMA BEGINNING

From among the many interesting stories of persons and events back of the construction of the new Seireien Home is that of Norio Ebie (e-bi-eh), the new director. We share it below in the belief that it demonstrates in a concrete way the inter-relationship of the church and social work and education and that it also presents a challenge to contributors to Seireien and to readers of the News Letter.

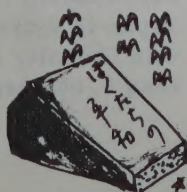
In 1955 Norio Ebie was a second-year student in the Nagoya Gakuin Junior High School. One day he received a letter from the classmates of Sadako Sasaki at Noboricho Junior High School in Hiroshima. Sadako had recently died of atomic disease and her classmates were writing to school children all over Japan asking for contributions for the erection of a monument to her.

Norio had received the letter as president of the religious club at his school. He began a campaign to raise money in his school and also among the 300 members of the Nagoya Church Sunday School, which he attended and where most of the students were from Nagoya Gakuin and Kinjo Gakuin. From the students' contributions of from one to one hundred yen, a considerable sum of money was collected and sent to Hiroshima.



Three years later, Norio was living in Tokyo, studying at the Jochoku Senior High School and living in a small rooming house. Another letter with a Hiroshima postmark found its way to him, although to this day he does not know how. It contained an invitation from the committee in Hiroshima to attend the unveiling of the children's monument on May 5.

The evening before the ceremony, a meeting was held as a part of the production of the film, Sembazuru ("A Thousand Cranes"). The film told the story of the events surrounding the death of Sadako.



The girl had believed that if she succeeded in folding a thousand paper cranes, she would be cured. She died after folding only 643, but her classmates took up her cause. "A thousand cranes" became the symbol of peace and the folding of a paper crane an expression of one's desire for peace.

At the May 4 meeting Norio was asked to make a speech. He said:

The completion of the monument in memory of the children who died as a result of the A-bomb is not the end of the project. Rather it is the beginning--the beginning of a new responsibility on the part of the members of the monument committee and on the part of those who have given to the fund. Each one must discover how he or she can respond through his daily life to the social problems that are symbolized by the bomb.

Following the May 4 meeting, Dr. Torataro Kawamura took Norio in his car and deposited him for the night at the home of Mary McMillan, a missionary and teacher at Hiroshima Jo Gakuin, inasmuch as home entertainment had been arranged for all the youth delegates.

As he was leaving Hiroshima the day following the dedication ceremony, Norio thought to himself, "I may never again come to Hiroshima--it is so far from Tokyo and from my home in Nagoya." He did not foresee the future developments, but the immediate effect of the experience was to lead in the direction of the decision which eventually took him into studies in the field of social welfare at Meiji Gakuin.

Though Norio had been active in Christian activities, he did not formally receive baptism until the following year, 1959, at Shinanomachi Church where, as in Nagoya, he had been active in Sunday School.

Norio's father had not returned from the South Pacific after World War II, and his widowed mother living in Nagoya had a hard struggle to bring up her family. As a result Norio lived apart from his family after junior high school days, holding a series of part-time jobs to keep himself in school. He worked as an office boy in a publishing company, took care of the animals in the experimental laboratory at Tokyo University and was page in a bank. Miss McMillan helped establish a contact for him with a pastor in the States, who provided him with a scholarship throughout his undergraduate years.

In 1965 Norio Ebie completed his undergraduate degree in social work at the night school of Meiji Gakuin. At the invitation of Larry Thompson, he went to Hiroshima to be a group worker on the staff of the Hiroshima Christian Social Center. A year later he married Miss Yoshi Higuchi, a kindergarten teacher at the Iwakuni Church, in the city of Iwakuni not far from Hiroshima.

Beginning to feel frustrated at not having either the degree of specialization in, nor the depth of knowledge of, social work he felt necessary if he were to spend the rest of his life in this field, in the spring of 1967, Ebie returned to Tokyo with his wife to enter the graduate department of the Meiji Gakuin School of Social Welfare. While in Tokyo the Ebies were again dependent upon part-time jobs for their livelihood.

During his graduate career, Ebie was visited several times by Larry Thompson, who was seeking to convince him that he was needed at the Christian Social Center after his graduation. Ebie's professors,

on the other hand, tried to urge him into the field of teaching. But somehow Hiroshima seemed to beckon. In the spring of 1969 he joined the staff of the Hiroshima Christian Social Center for a second time. In 1970 he became acting director of the Center, during the furlough of Director Larry Thompson.

It was early in 1971 that Ebie was approached about becoming the first director of Seireien, the new nursing home for elderly A-bomb victims and others in need of special care being sponsored by Christians in Hiroshima, with the support of people throughout Japan and around the world. A prominent member of the Seireien building committee was Dr. Kawamura, whom Ebie had met when he visited Hiroshima as a school boy in 1958.

As Ebie looks back now, he feels that his earlier experience in Hiroshima had a great deal to do with his decision to accept the invitation to become the director of Seireien.

"It is not," he says, "that I have any great body of knowledge about atomic problems or about peace to bring to the job, but simply a strong feeling of responsibility to learn and to do something more to help find a solution to such problems as these."



The Ebies have two children, a son, Tomoo, 3, and a daughter, Naoki, 11 months. They presently live in Iwakuni but will soon move into the new director's resident adjacent to the Seireien Home.

As to the prospects for the future of Seireien, Ebie feels that the Home's relationship to church members throughout Japan is extremely important. The Home was literally made possible by the more than 5,000 separate gifts now amounting to

more than ¥45 million (\$137,000) from churches in all parts of Japan, including Okinawa.

"Every place I've been," says Ebie, lifting his glasses and setting them in his hair--in a gesture characteristic of him when he is thinking intensively--"people told me that to raise half of that amount would be exceptional for an old people's home."



Ebie says:

I wonder if people in all these churches, all over Japan and in other parts of the world, are not really more conscious of what they expect us here in Hiroshima to do than are we, who have had our heads so deeply buried in the problems of blueprints, financial plans and negotiations with public officials. The Home could very easily become a local project. We must not let this happen.

Somehow we must find out what all these people expect of us. They must in some way communicate to us what it is that motivated them to make these unprecedented gifts.

And through the lives of these elderly people entrusted to us--some of them persons who have experienced the A-bomb disaster--we must come to grips in a responsible way with their expectations.

Beyond all this, there is the matter of welfare for the elderly people in general, which is still very weak in Japan. Seireien has a big role to play in advances that must be made in this field as well as playing its special role in the peace movement.

The words are those of the boy who saw the completion of the monument in memory of the children who died as a result of the A-bomb not as the end of a project but as the beginning--the beginning of a new responsibility for those who gave to the fund and who must discover through their own daily lives how to respond to the problems symbolized by the bomb.

what has been --- I N T H E K Y O D A N --- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Council of Cooperation Consultation with members of North American Interboard Committee to be held Nov. 17-19 at Atami (Shimpo 10/23)

II. Education

Christian Education Week being observed Oct. 17-24 with Okinawa as adult theme (Shimpo 10/9)

Faith and Order

Faith and Order Committee discusses with Holiness group members their concern for retaining the present Kyodan Confessional position (Shimpo 10/2)

Kyodan (national and kyoku level)

Standing Committee meets and votes to further postpone General Assembly (Shimpo 10/16, News Letter 10/20)

Ministry

Shin-ai-so Home for retired Kyodan pastors and widows is being enlarged (Tsushin 9/14)

Kyodan Committee of Ministerial Qualifications interviews applicants recommended by districts on Sept. 23 (Tsushin 9/24)

Mission

NCC Div. of Mission holds conference on Salvation Today 9/21-24 (Shimbun 10/2)

Okinawa

Committee on Social Concerns issues statement on the Diet session on Okinawa asking for aroused public opinion (Shimpo 10/9)

Okinawa Seminar not to be held in 1972 (Shimpo 10/9)

Overseas

Revs. Tsukamoto and Ehara go to serve Japanese American United Methodist churches in Denver and West Los Angeles (Shimpo 10/23)

Social Concerns

Reaction against Okinawa reversion details are center of seminar on Militarization and the Japanese Church 9/14-16 (Shimpo 10/2)

NCC to conduct ¥10 million fund campaign for Ikuno Center in Osaka, project of Korean Christian Church in Japan (Tsushin 10/2)

Seireien Nursing Home for the Elderly in Hiroshima is dedicated Sept. 26, opens doors to first residents Oct. 4 (Shimpo 10/9, News Letter 10/20) see "Okinawa" and "Youth"

Social Work

Miss Gertrud Kuecklich receives Mainichi award for contributions to social work in Japan in childhood education (Shimbun 9/25)

Women

National Federation of Church Women's Societies hold discussion-training session (Shimpo 10/16)

Youth

Chiba sub-district raises funds and youth spend holiday in workcamp to repair typhoon damages (Shimpo 9/25)